

# LIBERATOR

LD C  
FILE ROOM  
NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Vol 10 No 4

APRIL 1970 40c

DOOMSDAY

Editorial

## Rape of African History



Theatre Review  
CLAYTON RILEY

ONE BLACK COLLEGE



# LIBERATOR

Vol 10 No 4 April 1970

**LIBERATOR:** Copyright 1970, by the Afro-American Research Institute, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is strictly prohibited.

**LIBERATOR** is published monthly by the Afro-American Research Institute, Inc. 244 East 46 Street, New York, N. Y., 10017

**Subscription Prices:** Within Continental United States:

Single Copy: 40¢ 1 year \$4.00  
2 years \$7.50

Foreign surface Mail: 1 year \$6.00

Foreign air mail: 1 year \$13.00

All manuscripts, letters, subscription orders, changes of address should be sent to **LIBERATOR**, 244 East 46 Street, N.Y., N.Y., 10017  
Tel: YUkon 6-5939, area code 212  
Advertising Rates Sent Upon Request



Daniel H. Watts  
editor-in-chief

**EDITORS**  
Richard Gibson  
*Africa, Asia and Europe*  
Clayton Riley  
*Arts*  
Tom Feelings  
*Illustrator*

## Contents

### EDITORIAL

Doomsday 3

### AFRICA

Rape of African History: The Hamitic Hypothesis  
by Edith R. Sanders 4

### ANALYSIS

One Black College  
by Houston A. Baker, Jr. 14

### POETRY

First Paradox  
A Welfare Mother  
by Glenn Hines 17

### DRAMA

Terminus and Non Terminus  
by Ed White 18

### BOOK REVIEWS

Whispers from a Continent  
The Spook Who Sat by the Door  
by Ron Welburn 20

### THEATRE REVIEW

Purlie  
by Clayton Riley 21

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** 22

**PHOTO ESSAY** by Anthony Barboza 23

Cover photo: A young Fulah woman, Guinea  
*United Nations*

# Doomsday

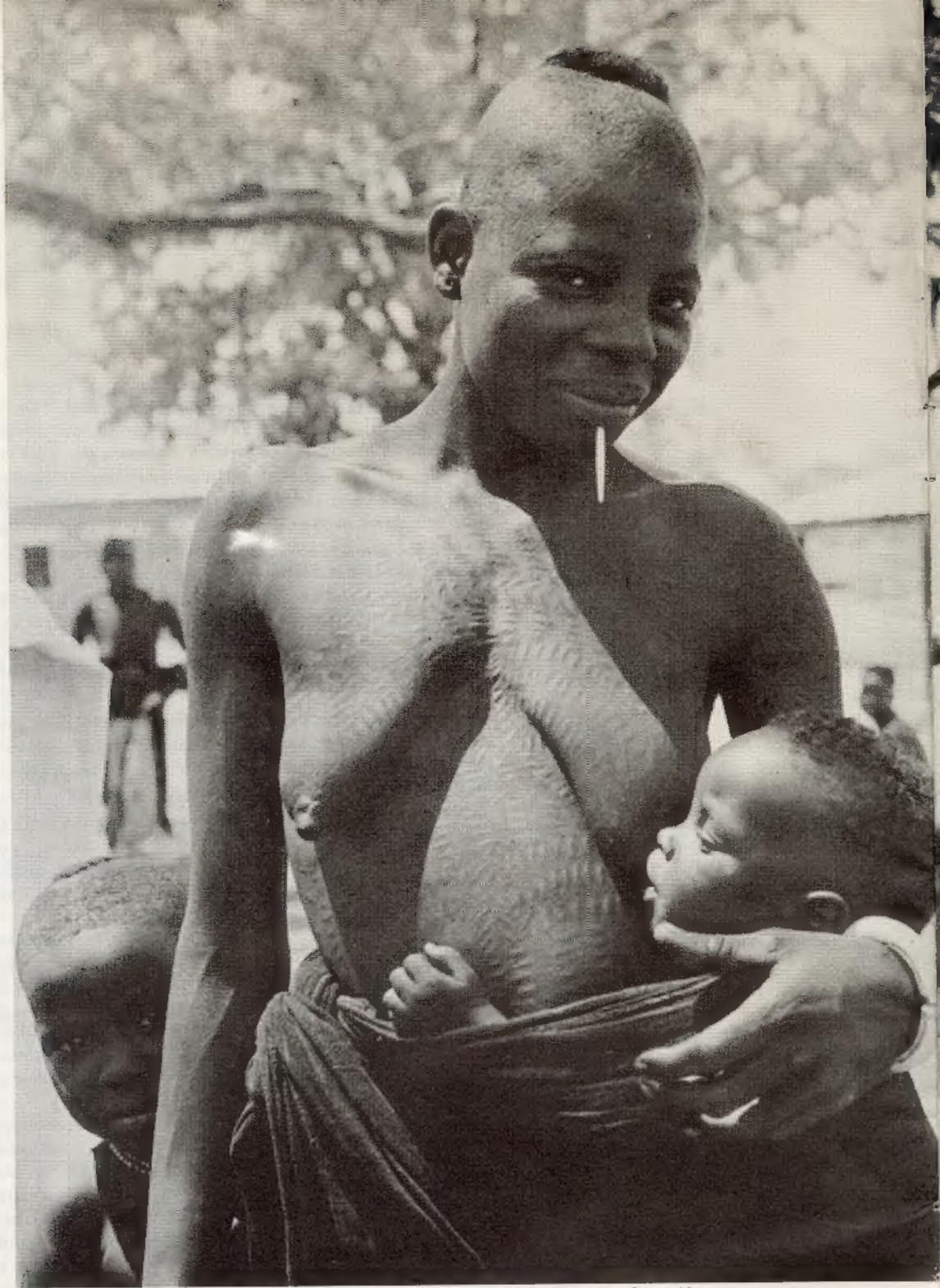
It's true, the rumors have been confirmed. Dr. Strangelove is alive and well and doing his thing. We have long known that he was lurking in the underside of the Detroit chariots, somewhere between the high-compression gas-eating engine and the muffler exhaust tailpipe emitting its human destroying fumes. Now we find he has been lurking everywhere. It is Strangelove for example (it has to be) who is behind such proposals as the 1800 mile an hour supersonic jet -- a machine whose jet stream, experts say, will mix with the cloud formations and cause a permanent change in climate over much of the U.S. and Europe, which in turn will result in crop failures. It is Strangelove who is spreading his self-destructive tentacles into the ponds, lakes, rivers, oceans, atmosphere, *life* of mother earth, leaving in his wake the time bomb of environmental pollution. Once a specialist in the military war-making and death dealing machines, Dr. Strangelove has unleashed his strange fascination for death upon the world.

The chief weapons our Dr. Strangelove has going for him are human greed, avarice, hypocrisy and man's insatiable appetite to consume...*anything*. Western technology, long heralded and held up as an example for the so-called developing nations to follow, has succeeded, according to most reports from responsible earth watchers, ecologists, scientists, poets and just plain people, in building its own doomsday machine under the slogan of "progress is our most important product." The demands of our technology upon the natural resources are not only resulting in the rapid decrease of such resources but more important, in the possible death of the very life-giving regenerative process. To quote only a few alarming statistics: every year we throw back 800,000,000 tons of carbon monoxide, 10,000,000 tons of dust, 22,000,000 tons of sulfur dioxide and 2,500,000,000 tons of pollution in general to mother nature. It is now predicted by many ecologists that by the year 2,000, thirty years from now, if we continue at our present rate of technological "progress" much of the northern hemisphere will be unable to support life as we now know it. If only 10% of these predictions come true, then much of the Black vs. white confrontation of today will fade into oblivion. (Besides, we know who the first 10% to go will be.)

If we are to survive, then we must begin now to rethink, possibly dismantle this all consuming colossus called Western technology. And this would mean, of necessity, that our profit-oriented economic system--and the lifestyles we've developed because of it -- must be ground to a halt, with new and more viable economic/political/social institutions developed instead. Institutions that will not require the concepts of built-in obsolescence, waste, and human exploitation in order to maintain themselves. If we can take the first genuine steps now toward changing and improving the quality of our lives, then perhaps we, all of us, may live to see the dawn of the twenty-first century....

-- DANIEL H. WATTS





A Kamberi woman and baby in Agwarra, Northern Nigeria

# ***RAPE OF AFRICAN HISTORY: The Hamitic Hypothesis***

By EDITH R. SANDERS

photos by united nations





A Latuka woman from Southern Sudan of Nilo-Hamitic origin



A Northern Sudanese woman

The Hamitic hypothesis is well-known to students of Africa. It states that everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by the Hamites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian race. Seligman (*Races of Africa*) formulates it as follows:

Apart from relatively late Semitic influence...the civilizations of Africa are the civilizations of the Hamites, its history the record of these peoples and of their interaction with the two other African stocks, the Negro and the Bushman, whether this influence was

exerted by highly civilized Egyptians or by such wider pastoralists as are represented at the present day by the Beja and Somali...The incoming Hamites were pastoral 'Europeans'—arriving wave after wave—better armed as well as quicker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes.

On closer examination of the history of the idea, there emerges a previous elaborate Hamitic theory, in which the Hamites are believed to be Black. It becomes clear then that the hypothesis is symptomatic

of the nature of race relations, that it has changed its content if not its nomenclature through time, and that it has become a problem of epistemology.

In the beginning there was the Bible. The word "Ham" appears there for the first time in Genesis, chapter five. Noah cursed Ham, his youngest son, and said:

Cursed be Canaan;  
A servant of servants shall he be  
unto his brethren.  
And he said,  
Blessed be Jehovah, the God of  
cont next pg



Shem;  
 And let Canaan be his servant.  
 God enlarge Japhet,  
 And let him dwell in the tent of  
 Shem;  
 And let Canaan be his servant.

Then follows an enumeration of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, Japhet, and their sons who were born to them after the flood. The Bible makes no mention of racial differences among the ancestors of mankind. It is much later that an idea of race appears with reference to the sons of Noah; it concerns the descendants of Ham. The Babylonian Talmud, a collection of oral traditions of the Jews, appeared in the sixth century A.D.; it states that the descendants of Ham are cursed by being Black, and depicts Ham as a sinful man and his progeny as degenerates. (1) Thus, early tradition identified the Hamites with Blacks and endowed them with both certain physiognomical attri-

butes and an undesirable character. This notion persisted in the Middle Ages, when fanciful rabbinical expansions of the Genesis stories were still being made. Ham, some of them said, was supposed to have emasculated Noah, who cursed him thus (2):

"Now I cannot beget the fourth son whose children I would have ordered to serve you and your brothers! Therefore it must be Canaan, your firstborn, whom they enslave. And since you have disabled me...doing ugly things in blackness of night, Canaan's children shall be borne ugly and black! Moreover, because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness, your grandchildren's hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red; again because your lips jested at my misfortune, theirs shall swell; and because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked, and their male members shall be shamefully elongated! Men of this race are called Negroes, their forefather Canaan commanded them

to love theft and fornication, to be banded together in hatred of their masters and never to tell the truth."

Scholars who study the Hebrew myths of the Genesis claim that these oral traditions grew out of a need of the Israelites to rationalize their subjugation of Canaan, a historical fact validated by the myth of Noah's curse. Talmudic or Midrashic explanations of the myth of Ham were well known to Jewish writers in the Middle Ages, as seen in this description by Benjamin of Tudela, a twelfth-century merchant and traveller south of Aswan:

There is a people...who, like animals, eat of the herbs that grow on the banks of the Nile and in their fields. They go about naked and have not the intelligence of ordinary men. They cohabit with their sisters and anyone they can find...they are taken as slaves and sold in Egypt and neighbouring countries. These sons of Ham are black slaves.

Men from the Tamawar region of Morocco





Ideas have a way of being accepted when they become useful as a rationalization of an economic fact of life. As Graves and Patai put it: "That Negroes are doomed to serve men of lighter color was a view gratefully borrowed by Christians in the Middle Ages; a severe shortage of cheap manual labor caused by the plague made the reinstitution of slavery attractive."

The notion of the Black-Hamite was generally accepted by the year 1600. In one of the earliest post-medieval references found, Leo Africanus, the great Arab traveller and one-time protege of Pope Leo X, wrote about Black Africans as being descended from Ham. His translator, the Englishman John Pory, followed the text with his own commentary in which he stressed the *punishment* suffered by Ham's descendants, thus reinforcing the myth in modern times.

Some seventeenth-century writers acquaint us with notions current in their time by citing European authors, known or unknown today, who wrote, directly or indirectly, about the low position of Black-Hamites in the world. This was further strengthened by European travellers who went to Africa for reasons of trade or curiosity. Concurrently, there existed another point of view, in which the term "Hamite" denoted a sinner of some sort, not necessarily a Black, although the characteristics of the Hamite were the same negative ones variously attributed to the Black.

The idea of a Black-Hamite was not universally accepted. Some individuals believed that Blackness was caused by the soil on which a person lived together with the extreme heat of the sun. Others doubted that either the climate theory or the efficacy of Noah's curse were responsible for the Black's physiognomy, but reasoned that "their colour and wool are innate or seminal, from their first beginning...."

By and large, however, the Black was seen as a descendant of Ham, bearing the stigma of Noah's curse. This view was compatible with the various interests extant at that time. On the one hand, it allowed exploitation of the Black for economic gain



A worker from Ibadan, Nigeria

to remain undisturbed by any Christian doubts as to the moral issues involved. "A servant of servants shall he be" clearly meant that the Black was preordained for slavery. Neither individual nor collective guilt was to be borne for a state of the world created by the Almighty. On the other hand, Christian cos-

mology could remain at peace, because identifying the Black as a Hamite--thus as a brother--kept him in the family of man in accordance with the biblical story of the creation of mankind.

The eighteenth century saw an efflorescence of scientific inquiry, which directed its efforts to the

*cont next pg*





A Nigerian from the Western region

understanding of man's place in the world. Modern science had developed a century earlier and had attempted to establish order in the universe; the nature of man, however, was not part of scientific investigation, but remained in the province of theology. This state of affairs became unsatisfactory to the later scholars,

namely the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, who tried to apply scientific methods to the study of man and whose theories as to the origin of the race often came into direct conflict with the Scriptures.

The Black's place in nature was the subject of great debate at that time. One of the crucial issues of



An Amhara girl from Majete, Ethiopia

this debate was the question of unity in mankind, or monogenism, as opposed to the separate creation of races or polygenism. (3) The concept of the Black-Hamite was steadily losing ground because theological interpretation of the peopling of the world did not satisfy the men of the Enlightenment. The myth was now kept alive mainly by the clergy, who tried to keep their hold on the laity by discrediting the savants as infidels.

The polygenist theories led to a widespread belief that the Black was sub-human and at the same time de-emphasized his relationship to the accursed Ham. The monogenist theories attempted to explain Black physical characteristics by natural rather than mythical causes. The conservative theologians still clung to the now classic exegesis of the Old Testament and discouraged any attempt at a different interpretation. At the end of the eighteenth century, many famous men espoused and popularized one of two views regarding the Black. One was that he was the result of "degeneration" due to various environmental conditions. The other and more frequent view was that he was a separate creation, subhuman in character.

The Western world, which was growing increasingly rich on the institution of slavery, grew increasingly reluctant to look at the Black slave and see him as a brother under the skin. Some writers feel



that the image of the Black man deteriorated in direct proportion to his value as a commodity, and the proudly rational and scientific white man was impatient to find some definitive proof for the exclusion of the Black from the family of man and for ultimate denial of common ancestry. (4)

The catalyst which made this possible was a historical event, namely Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. Because Napoleon shared the passion for science and antiquities that was the hallmark of the Enlightenment, he invited archaeologists and other scientists to join him. The experts who had accompanied him discovered treasures that led them to found the new science of Egyptology and an institute on Egyptian soil. These discoveries were to revolutionize history's view of the Egyptian and lay the basis for a new Hamitic myth.

Napoleon's scientists made the revolutionary discovery that the beginnings of Western civilization were earlier than the civilizations of the Romans and Greeks. Mysterious monuments, evidences of the beginnings of science, art, and well-preserved mummies were uncovered. Attention was drawn to the population that lived among these ancient splendours and was presumably descended from the people who had created them. It was a well-mixed population, such as it is at the present time, with physical types running from light to Black and with many physiognomical variations. The French scholars came to the conclusion that the Egyptians were "Nogroids."

The view that the Egyptians were "Nogroid" and highly civilized

apparently existed before the French expedition to Egypt. Count Volney, a French traveller to the Middle East, spent four years in Egypt and Syria and wrote in his *Travels through Syria and Egypt*:

How are we astonished...when we reflect that to the race of negroes, at present our slaves, and the objects of our contempt, we owe our arts, sciences, and...when we recollect that, in the midst of these nations, who call themselves the friends of liberty and humanity, the most barbarous of slaveries is justified; and that it is even a problem whether the understandings of negroes be of the same species with that of white men!

In spite of the deserved respect which Volney enjoyed, his opinions on this subject were not accepted.

Nevertheless, the Egyptian expedition made it impossible to hide that seeming paradox of a population of Blacks who were, once upon a time, originators of the oldest civilization of the West. The conflicting ideologies which existed in the West made it difficult for the various proponents of these ideologies to deal with the notion as it stood. Such a notion upset the main existing tenets; it could not be internalized by those individuals on both sides of the Atlantic who were convinced of the innate inferiority of the Black, nor by those who adhered to the biblical explanation of the origin of races. To the latter such an idea was blasphemous, as Noah's curse condemned the Hamites to misery and precluded high original achievement.

Egypt became the focus of great interest among the scientists as well as among the lay public. The fruits

cont next pg

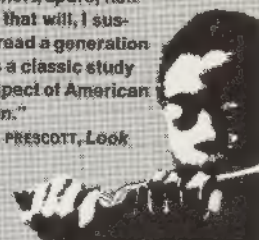
## "This book is like a weapon

... cold, blunt, painful. It's the saddest book on education I have ever read, and its truth is its sadness."—RONALD GROSS, *N. Y. Times Book Review*

## "It's the real thing

... A short, spare, honest book that will, I suspect, be read a generation hence as a classic study of one aspect of American education."

—PETER S. PRESCOTT, *Look*



## DIARY OF A HARLEM SCHOOLTEACHER

by Jim Haskins

Introduction by Rhody McCoy

\$4.95, now at your bookstore

GROVE PRESS

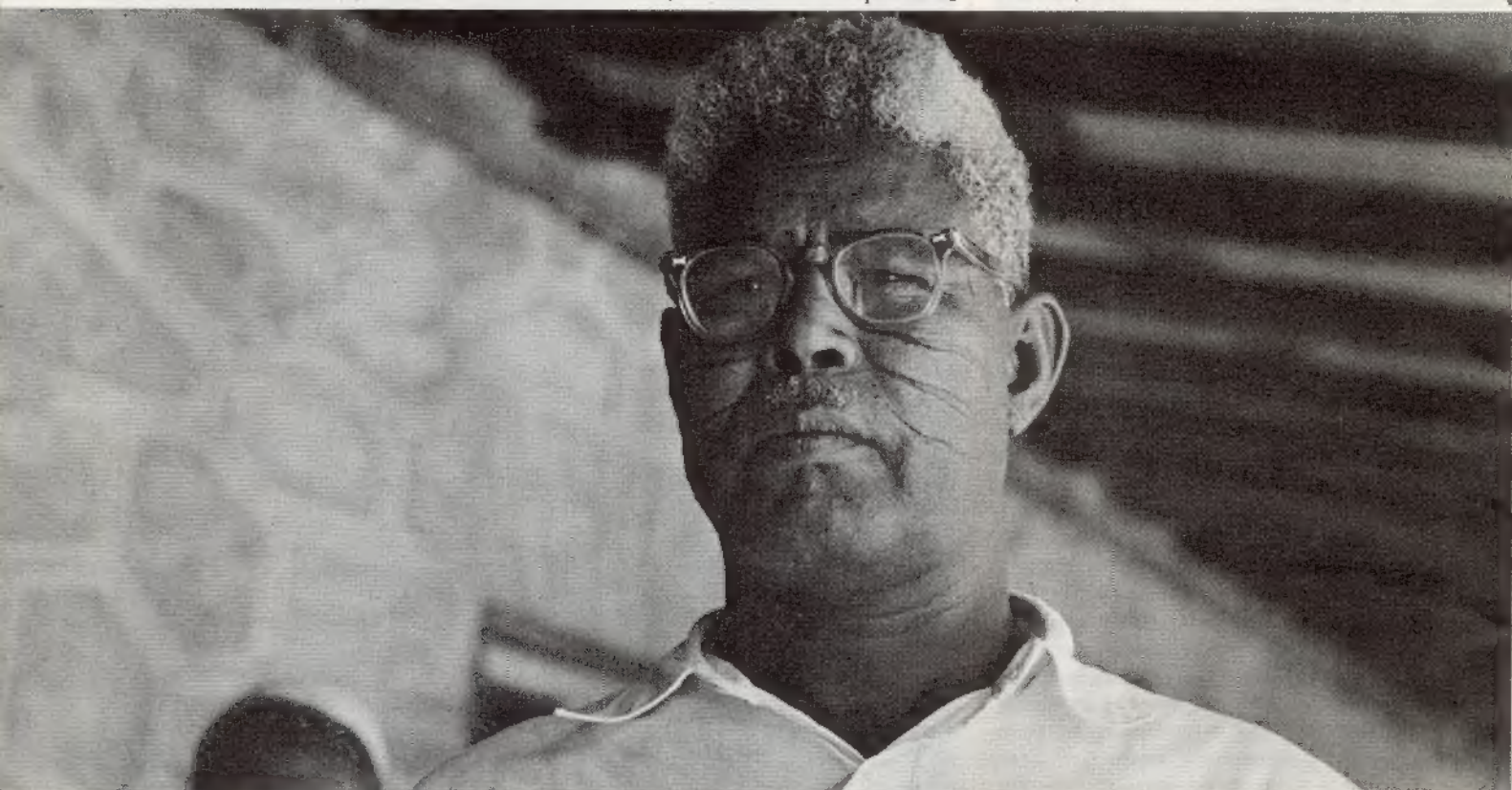


of this interest were not long in coming. A few short years after the Egyptian expedition, there appeared a large number of publications dealing with Egypt and Egyptians. Many of these works seemed to have had as their main purpose an attempt to prove in some way that the Egyptians were not Black. The arguments which followed brought forth the questions of language, migration, ancient writers, and the existence of mummies. The polygenist theories

peoples were colonists from Syria or Arabia Felix. Since ancient writers were silent on the subject of the African physiognomy of the Egyptian, it was understood that in effect Egyptians were not African, as such a fact would have startled the ancients into a detailed description. Herodotus himself, ran the argument, described them in comparative not absolute terms. Thus "black and woolly haired" meant black as compared to the Greeks and woolly haired as compared to

Browne insisted that the Egyptians were white. Although he himself did not call them "Hamites," he paved the way for his successors who were to identify the Egyptians as such.

Modern times showed their influence on theological writings as well. The new Hamitic concept made its appearance quite early in the nineteenth century, spearheaded by the clergy. If the Black was a descendant of Ham, and Ham was cursed, how could he be the creator



A Northern Sudanese

of race postulated that as each race was created separately, so it was endowed with its own language. Because the Coptic language was clearly related to Arabic, it was convenient to draw the conclusion that the nations who spoke related languages must have proceeded from one parental stock. Since the Ethiopians, Nubians and other allied peoples were declared not to be Black by European travellers, the Egyptians could not be said to be of African (Black) race, as all of these

the Greeks. Some said that the existence of the mummies itself constituted sufficient proof that these people were non-Black; to W. G. Browne the "...prescience of that people concerning errors into which posterity might fall, exhibits irrefragable proof of their features and of the colour of their skin..." clearly implying, therefore, that the ancient Egyptians knew they could be mistaken for Africans, and so left their bodies in evidence to refute such an allegation.

of a great civilization? It follows logically that the theologians had to take another look, both at the Bible and at its explanation of the origin of the races of man. The veracity of the Scriptures obviously could not be denied. New interpretations of the meaning of Scriptures were offered. Egyptians, it was now remembered, were descendants of Mizraim, a son of Ham. Noah had only cursed Canaan-son-of-Ham, so that it was Canaan and his progeny alone who suffered the



malediction. Ham, his other sons, and their children were not included in the curse.

Scholars re-read the Book of Genesis focusing on the genealogy of the three ancestors of mankind, and especially Ham. The histories of the sons of Ham were discussed, particularly those of Cush and Mizraim. The question was raised then whether it was Ham who had been cursed after all, or only Canaan. It was indeed Canaan who was cursed, but the rest of the progeny of Ham went on to prosper.

So it came to pass that the Egyptians emerged as Hamites, Caucasoid, uncursed and capable of high civilization. This new Hamitic myth, this time with a Caucasoid protagonist, became widely accepted in the early decades of the nineteenth century. At the same time the scientific bases of the new Hamitic myth were being devised and, allegedly, substantiated.

Perhaps because slavery was both still legal and profitable in the United States, and because it was deemed necessary and right to protect it, there arose an American school of anthropology which attempted to prove scientifically that the Egyptian was a Caucasian, far removed from the inferior Black. As Mannheim said, each intellectual stand is functionally dependent on the "differentiated social group reality standing behind it." (5) Such workers as Dr. Morton, Josiah Nott, and George Gliddon collected, measured, interpreted and described the human crania. The comparative studies made of these crania led Morton to believe that the Egyptian osteological formation was Caucasian, and that it was a race indigenous to the Nile Valley. He also postulated fixity of species, considering it a primordial organic form, permanent through time. Nott and Gliddon, who acted as Morton's apostles, also bolstered his interpretation by explaining the Black admixture of the Egyptians as being a population which descended from numerous slaves kept by Egyptians in ancient days. These theories attempted to include the Egyptians in the branch of the Caucasoid race,

to explain their accomplishments on the basis of innate racial superiority, and to exclude the Black from any possibility of achievement by restating his alleged inferiority and his position of "natural slave." The conclusions of American scholars found a receptive audience in Europe, where craniology was considered to yield positive and meaningful data, a point of view expressed by two scientists of world renown the Drs. Retzius of Sweden and Broca of France. The intellectual vogue of the day was the stress on "facts," not abstract theories, in all disciplines. Craniology provided a seemingly concrete "fact," thus fitting in neatly with the prevailing academic attitudes.

The science of philology added weight to the new Hamitic theory. This young science was developing at a time when language and race were considered to be inextricably bound together, an approach which lent itself to polygenist theories. C.K.J. Bunsen, a philologist and an Egyptologist, reported two branches of cognate languages, the Semitic and what he called the Iranian. Khamitic or Egyptian he postulated to be anterior to Semitic and antediluvian. Here was irrefutable proof, it seemed, that the Hamitic language belonged to the Caucasoid peoples, and it was eagerly adopted by scholars and theologians. The new Hamitic myth was gaining momentum.

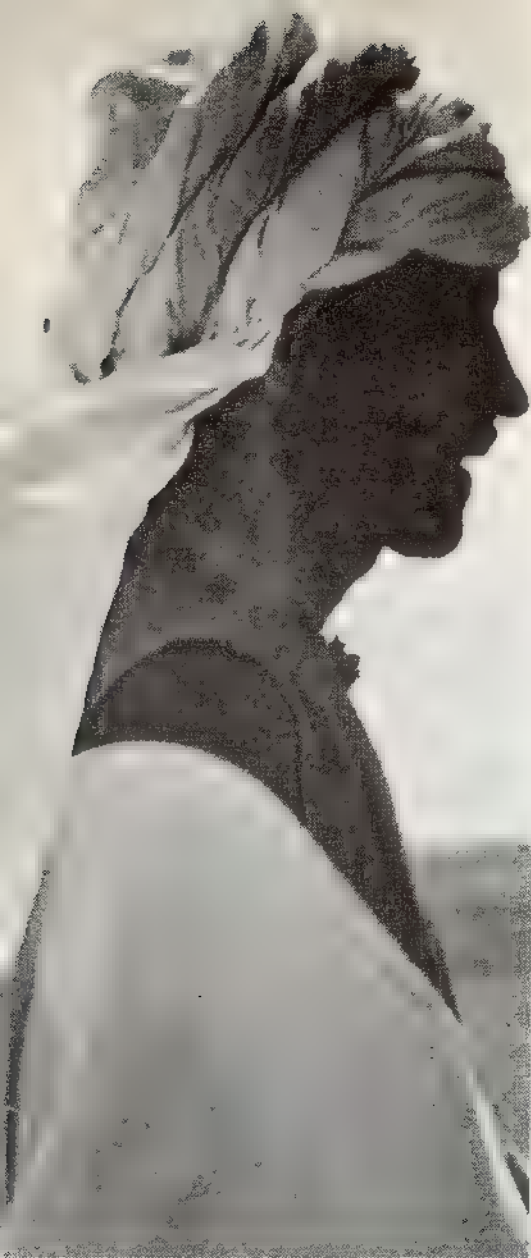
The late nineteenth century provided two new ideologies which utilized and expanded the concept of the Caucasoid Hamite: colonialism and modern racism. Both shaped the European attitude to Africa and Africans. The travellers found a variety of physical types in Africa, and their ethnocentrism made them value those who looked more like themselves. These were declared to be Hamitic, or of Hamitic descent, and endowed with the myth of superior achievements and considerable beneficial influence on their Black brothers. John Hanning Speke was seminal to the Hamitic hypothesis which we know today. Upon discovery of the kingdom of Buganda with its complex political organiza-

tion, he attributed its "barbaric civilization" to a nomadic pastoralist race related to the Hamitic Galla, thus setting the tone for the interpreters to come. The Hamites were designated as early culture-bearers in Africa owing to the natural superiority of intellect and character of all Caucasoids. Such a viewpoint had dual merit for European purposes: it maintained the image of the Black as an inferior being, and it pointed to the alleged fact that development could come to him only by mediation of the white race. (6) It also implied a self-appointed duty of the "higher" races to civilize the "lower" ones, a notion which was eventually formulated as "the white man's burden." At this point in time the Hamite found himself in an ambiguous position. On the one hand he was considered to be Caucasoid, that is superior. On the other hand he was a native, part of the "burden," a man to benefit from European civilization. Here the Teutonic theory of race showed its adaptability. Having devised a hierarchy within the Caucasian race, the builders of the theory placed the Teutonic Anglo-Saxon on top of the ladder with the Slavs on the lowest rung. But an even lower position could always be added, and the Hamites filled the space admirably. "Politics and race theories seemed natural allies"; they provided a seemingly cogent ideological framework for colonial expansion and exploitation. (7)

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the Caucasoid-Hamite solidly established. Science supplanted theology as the alpha and omega of truth. Racial "scientific" classifications, which had to face the physical diversity of the various "Hamites," established a separate Hamitic branch of the Caucasian race, closely following the creation of a linguistic entity called a family of Hamitic languages. Linguistic typologies were based on racial types and racial classifications on linguistic definitions. The confusion surrounding the "Hamite" was steadily compounded as the terms of reference became increasingly overlapping and vague. The racial classi-

cont next pg





(above) A Bedouin from the South of Algeria

(right) A Kamberi tribeswoman, Northern Nigeria

fication of "Hamites" encompassed a great variety of types from fair-skinned, blonde, blue-eyed (Berbers) to Black (Ethiopians).

Linguistic classifications were based on geography, racial characteristics and occupation, rather than on rigorous methodology pertaining solely to language. Grammatical gender became the main diagnostic of the so-called Hamitic languages. Although grammatical gender exists in many unrelated languages of the world, it was not found in the languages of the "true" negro (racial category again). Thus linguistic typologies had racial bases just as racial typologies were based on linguistics. (8)

Because the Hamites discovered in Africa south of the Sahara were described as pastoralists and the traditional occupation of the Black

was supposedly agriculture, pastoralism and all its attributes became endowed with an aura of superiority of culture, giving the Hamite a third dimension: cultural identity.

The historians who began to compile histories of Africa wrote with an often unconscious racial bias, and accepted the dicta of the discoverers of that continent as indisputable proven facts and presented them as historical explanations of the African past. (9)

Much of anthropology gave its support to the Hamitic myth. C.G. Seligman found a cultural substratum of supposedly great influence in Africa. In 1930 he published his famous *Races of Africa*, which went through several editions and which was reprinted in 1966 still basically unchanged. He refined the Serg-devised classifications of Hamitic





peoples, adding the category of Nilotes or "half-Hamites." Every trace and/or sign of what is usually termed "civilized" in Africa was attributed to alien, mainly Hamitic, origin. In such a way, iron-working was supposed to have been introduced to the Blacks by pastoral Hamites, along with complex political institutions, irrigation and age-grade systems. (10) Archaeological findings of any magnitude were also ascribed to outside influences, and kept the Black African out of his own culture history. In the eyes of the world he stood stripped of any intellectual or artistic genius and of any ability at all which would allow him, now, in the past, or in the future, to be the master of his life and country.

The confluence of modern nationalism and the ensuing modern racism



evolved from earlier nineteenth-century national romanticism and developed through theories of de Gobineau and adaptations of the Darwinian revolution. It was echoed in all Western nations, culminating finally in the ideology of Nazi Germany. Because that leading exponent of racism became the enemy of most of Europe and of the United States during World War II, German-championed ideology seemed to have lost some of its popularity. The Hamitic myth ceased to be useful with African nations which have been gaining their independence one by one, and the growing African nationalism drew scholarly attention to Africa's past. Many of the scholars were unencumbered by colonial ties; some of them were themselves African. They began to discover that Africa was not a *tabula rasa*, but that it had a past, a history which could be reconstructed; that it was a continent which knew empire builders at a time when large areas of Europe stagnated in the Dark Ages; that it knew art and commerce.

Some writers started to throw doubts on the Hamitic hypothesis by discovering indigenous achievements of the past, (11) while others attempted to explode it. (12) Still the myth endures, is occasionally subverted by new terminology (such as "Southern Cushites") (13) and stubbornly refuses to give way and allow an unbiased look at what can be validly ascertained from African culture history. It would be well-nigh impossible to point to an individual and recognize in him a Hamite according to racial, linguistic and cultural characteristics to fit the image that has been presented to us for so long. Such an individual does not exist. The word still exists, endowed with a mythical meaning: it endures through time and history, and, like a chameleon, changes its colour to reflect the changing light. As the word became flesh, it engendered many problems of scholarship.

## FOOTNOTES

1. T.F. Gossett, *Race—the History of an Idea in America* (1963), p. 5
2. R. Graves and R. Patai, *Hebrew Myths* (1964), p. 121.
3. Some of the outstanding monogenists were Linnaeus, Buffon and Blumenbach. Some outstanding polygenists were Voltaire, Lord Kames and Charles White (an English physician and author of *An Account of the Regular Gradations in Man and in Different Animals* (London, 1799)).
4. E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (University of Carolina Press, 1944)
5. P.D. Curtin, *Image of Africa* (New York, 1964).
6. K. Mannheim, *Essays in Sociology of Knowledge* (1952), p. 190
7. With respect to the role played by such theories in English colonial expansion see E. Sanderson, *Africa in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1898); F. D. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (Edinburgh, 1898).
8. J. Scott Keltie, *Partition of Africa* (London, 1895); W.L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York, 1935).
9. J. Barzun, *Race: A Modern Superstition* (New York, 1965) p. 33
10. Early work on the Hamitic language family was done by R. N. Cust, *A Sketch of African Languages* (London, 1883) also Lepsius and Meinhof.
11. See A.R. Atterbury, *Islam in Africa* (New York, 1899); J. W. Gregory, *The Foundation of British East Africa* (London, 1901); K. Johnston, *Africa* (London, 1884).
12. S. Cole, *The Prehistory of East Africa* (Hammondsworth, 1954); K. Oberg in *African Political Systems*, M. Fortes and E. Evans-Pritchard (eds.); D. Westermann, *The African Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford, 1949), are only a few of a long list of examples.
13. G. Calton-Thompson, *The Zimbabwe Culture: Ruins and Reactions* (Oxford, 1931); J.P. Crazzolara, *The Luo, Missioni Africane* (Italy, 1950); two instances of such discoveries.
14. See for example D. Apter, *Political Kingdom in Uganda* (Princeton, 1961), p. 63; L. T. Fallers, *Bantu Bureaucracy*, East African Institute of Social Research (1956), pp. 27-9; J. H. Greenberg, *Studies in African Linguistic Classifications* (New Haven, 1955); I. Wallerstein, *Africa, the Politics of Independence* (New York, 1961), pp. 12-13; D. McCall, *Africa in Time Perspective* (Boston, 1964), pp. 136-138.
15. E.g. G.P. Murdock, *Africa, Its Peoples and Their Culture History* (New York, 1959).





Daniel H. Watts

## One Black College

Houston A. Baker, Jr.

Most of us came to college with the same dreams and aspirations; we had all been to at least one Jack-and-Jill party or to similar affairs. We understood the meaning of a morning coat and a cocktail dress, and surely we all knew the fashionable sports cars to drive -- MG, Austin, Triumph, etc. Education was our way back into Jack and Jill as "big people," and with the BA well in hand, we could all have at

least one of those cars to zip about in, toot our respective horns, and wave at fellow members of the club. Stocking caps were easy to come by, and Cardoza Sisters, a prestigious beauty parlor, was just down the street for the girls. After the first week of turmoil and frustration, therefore, after being chased about campus by upperclassmen intent on cutting our hair, after standing in interminable lines and hearing boring speeches right out of *Invisible Man*,

we began to settle down for our four-year sojourn.

But it would be unfair to categorize all the members of that freshman class of 1961 as products of the same mould; we came from different geographical areas, and we were from varying family backgrounds. Not all the female hair was long and black and straight, and some of the male hair even showed signs of having been left alone. Nevertheless, it only took a short time for Cal-



donia May Jackson from Ahoskie to become C. M. Jackson from North Carolina, or for Booker Washington Daniels from the Bronx to become B. Washington from "the magic city." The change was not due to that quality always attributed to youth, i.e., adaptability; the change was only part of our conscious effort to move into a society characterized by verities that had always been quoted to us as the old and correct verities -- quoted to us by parents, friends, and lovers. It just wasn't cool to be too much unlike the others who were standardized and proceeding with all due haste along the path toward executive offices in the Boule or membership in the sports car club of America.

Of course, the changes that we went through were not only in terms of physical appearance and nomenclature; they also included a shift in our perspective. Our perspective contracted, shrunk, was drenched in the myopia-producing solvents of the campus atmosphere; it was as though special potions were daily instilled into the drinking water and sent as mists through the ventilation systems. "The world! Baby, what you talking 'bout? It's your world, and you taking care of business!" The TCB generation, that was us. We had our own jargon filled with non-meaning for the outside world, and we had our own very special interests, which did not extend too far below the Mason-Dixon line, and certainly never expanded to include Africa, Asia, or South America. We were immune from tragedy, and we even talked of annihilating "those dirty niggers" -- the block boys, that is, who molested us when we went to get a late-night snack at the local delicatessen. TCB was the phrase for it; in our button-down shirts and Fifth-Avenue dresses, we could not be touched.

When the historians begin to compile their definitive reports on the upsurge of social consciousness during the first years of this decade, they can, with reasonable impunity, exclude at least one center of higher learning. For our biggest concerns were "getting over," avoiding the

state known as "on fire," and insuring that we were "what's happening." The biggest event was not the latest Freedom Ride nor the most recent Sit-In; the biggest event of the week was when the dormitory information ministers came around on Friday with the lists of parties. Beyond this, there was the act of currying favor with the members of the fraternity or sorority that one hoped to pledge and the constant practice needed to insure one's supremacy in the game room of the dormitory or the student center. The yearly events of note included the Student Council elections, which normally resulted in a sweep for one fraternity or one sorority, and the annual "coming off" parties given by the Greeks. Of course, all the Greek organizations made an annual trip down to the local hospital, which happened to be Black, to talk to sick children and take a few toys. In some instances, the fraternities and sororities even got together canned goods and the like for a poor family in the neighborhood (a gift which I am sure was appreciated as we perfumed and groomed young negroes jumped out of our cars and went jauntily up to ring the local doorbell chosen for the season).

Now all of this is not to say that we were unaware of "Civil Rights," that catchall of the last ten years. Some of us had participated in Sit-Ins back home, and not a few of us had read the latest books on the subject. Moreover, at any moment in a class discussion, the topic would unfathomably become the struggle of the Black man in the United States. We were aware that such an issue as "Civil Rights" existed, and a few of us even felt guilty enough to write to our friends back home and ask them how the struggle was going in the local township. For the most part, however, our guilt and commitment were "constructively channeled" by our professors, our administrators, and our dormitory supervisors.

"It's all right," they told us. "Education is the most important thing in the world. Why be ethnically oriented? For example, we don't

have a single course in the English Department in Black literature. One must strive to be what Oliver Goldsmith called 'a Citizen of the World'."

And the Dean of Liberal Arts assured me once that the most useful thing for the future of the university would be for all of the fraternities and sororities to sing arias from the operas instead of those "slow-moving" fraternity songs. Who could disagree? We all wanted to be "Citizens of the World," because we not only wanted that presidency of Jack and Jill, but also "a better life for our children" -- those future darlings with long, straight, black hair and stocking caps.

Our professors and administrators gave us adequate examples of how to be Citizens of the World. One had to be a censor of merit, a person who would not let anything -- even the student newspaper and the student literary magazine -- get into print without first approving it. Second, one had to be a staunch affirmer of standard truths: "The ROTC, an adjunct of America's most oppressive and imperialistic body, must remain compulsory on this campus. If it does not, we cannot get Federal money to perpetuate white Western culture." Third, one had to be a strong fighter, willing to stave off any attempt to make the rhetorically Black university Black in reality. Finally, in many instances, one only had to have minimal qualifications in order to foist erroneous teaching on the students; after all, the university allowed a professor with an MA seven years to get his Ph. D. These were our bold and shining examples, our knights who were white in everything but color.

Since they have been frequently mentioned, however, the Greek organizations should not be forgotten; though to talk of strong and viable "Greek" organizations in a discussion of a negro college seems almost as anomalous as those bodies appeared on campus. Ah yes! The fraternities and sororities. We came as gawking freshmen; we came as each of the groups assembled at its traditional spot on campus and crooned out its various melodies -- the song for the queen, the pledging

cont next pg



song, the alphabet song, *und so weiter*. We licked the boots of the established order; we ate the bread of humility during those innocent freshmen days; we ardently hoped for the opportunity to join such exalted bodies of men and women. Our chance came in our sophomore year. The letter to report! How I remember that cold Saturday dawn when a group of thirty-eight gathered outside the hallowed doors of the fraternity house. After a ride around the city blindfolded by sanitary napkins, we were brought back to the house, beaten with rolled newspaper, fed onions, garlic and hot sauce, told to shave off our mustaches, and given the title pledgee. What an honor. Needless to say, the following five or six weeks consisted of more of the same. You learned a lot about people and a lot about brutality, and then the day arrived when you were to be made an official member of the organization. That night we were all permitted to get drunk within the hallowed halls of the house, and for the rest of our lives we were condemned to carry the mark of such-and-such a fraternity. To know the handshake, however, seemed adequate compensation for the more ardent members of the group I joined. These ardent brothers were likely to accost you at any moment, anywhere, and insist on giving you "the shake." I saw one of my best friends transformed by the pledging experience into a maniacal, hard, cool, somewhat drunken creature; and I myself became the campus Don Juan, chasing everything that would come to my newly-found label as a fraternity man.

But enough of the social side of things. The academic aspect of any learning institution surely constitutes its saving or its damning grace, and to this day, I am still not sure in which category the academic component of our school should be placed. Adopting the Wordsworthian promise, one might say that to have been left as academically innocent as when we entered was our salvation. Moreover, one could seek justification in Rousseauistic concepts of the institution: by being a "non-institution," the university

(thank heavens) saved us from corruption. It seems no tribute to the university when I say that for most of us the freshman year was less difficult than our senior year in high school; moreover, it does not seem a tribute when I say that we read more in our first year of graduate school than we did in several years of college.

"But, perhaps," you might say along with the administrators, "the ease and lack of scope was what was needed for our underprivileged students." (I taught those same underprivileged students one summer, and they responded quite well to Langston Hughes, Sartre, Mendelssohn, and Richard Wright.) And after all, there was an Honors Program for those interested enough to make good marks. During two years of the special Honors Seminar, most of us learned a title or two and spent the majority of our time listening to the three faculty leaders argue among themselves about the issue at hand. In the English major, we were peppered with snippets, bombarded with clichés, and treated to one elderly female professor's rendition of the animal sounds in Wordsworth's poetry. This was for the most part; a special salute, however, goes to one or two for excellent instruction. I suppose two out of forty is not bad. But when all those letters beginning "We regret..." came from graduate schools, we seriously doubted that two out of forty was by any means a sufficient proportion. It was only at that time -- when the refusals mounted -- that we really began to get hot about discrimination. How strange!

But surely it was impossible, you must be saying by now, to have all those Black people in one place at one of the most crucial times in the history of the Black American and not have them doing *something*. And you are perfectly right; there were a few who were doing *something*, myself not included. I was among those who branded the few as "drop-outs," "freaks," "strange beings." To imagine that a Charles so-and-so wanted to go to Mississippi and work for the cause of freedom, or a Marsha such-and-such wanted to

go to Alabama to participate in the Freedom Rides. What curious people they were! They wore overalls and talked of revolution; they let their hair grow; and they were always struggling into class weary, beaten, and red-eyed after the latest demonstration. They didn't want to talk about "getting over" or being "on fire." They were simply, in short, too hard to relate to. Added to that, they were always getting in trouble with the administrators -- our father figures -- and they lost their ample scholarships of \$500 or more simply because they were working to help "free" us all. One of the most eminent leaders of this decade was there, and we laughed at him too. They were less than two out of forty, and we laughed or ignored them because we felt guilty. And this part of the "Black Thing" has never been told like it really was and still is in some places today.

At the one Black college in question, however, things have changed a bit, and continue to change. The "drop-outs," the "strange beings" are taking over. Most of us would not dare appear on that campus as we did in that warm and luxuriant fall of 1961. And we are happy that we would not dare to appear as once we did. For while it would be unsafe to appear anywhere among Black people today with long, straight, black hair and stocking caps, it is safe to appear as naturel among white people. Those few on the campus of one Black college have grown in number; they have joined a host of others, and they have made it safer to be Black in America. The heartaches, the frustrations, and the pains that they encountered from the "us" of 1961 must have been manifold, and undoubtedly at many other colleges (Black and white) it still is. From one man's point of view, I can only be thankful for that small number, and may the "old verities" be forever damned and all those shining white knights of then and now along with them. That the small number germinated there and continues to grow is, to my way of thinking, one of the only justifications for the existence of one Black college.



## FIRST PARADOX

The final cop-out  
 A syringe and  
 A pulsating vein  
 Coke, scag and  
 A thousand reefers  
 Burning on a  
 Junk sick morning  
 Blue crystals being  
 Shorted and sniffed  
 Into a raw nose  
 Damp, sunless morning  
 Shime and pus oozing  
 Out of an infected  
 Vein  
 Sticking needles into  
 every point of  
 Contact  
 Oh God why can't I o.d.?  
 Scratching, scratching, scratching  
 Bloody hands  
 Streets of decaying bones  
 And tormented pecan nutmeg  
 Babies  
 Junk pushing in  
 On a junk  
 Sick morning  
 Death around every  
 Corner  
 Broken skulls and deteriorated  
 Flesh  
 Swollen hands and ashy-grey  
 Faces  
 Transitions in rhythms of  
 Withdrawal  
 A burned-out brain  
 On a junk sick  
 Morning.

--- Glenn Hines

## A WELFARE MOTHER

*Hide*

Here comes my caseworker  
 I've got to find a bed  
 No heat, no hot water,  
 Roaches in the bread  
 Five kids to feed and  
 All I get is twenty-five dollars a head.

*Hide*

My caseworker is due  
 I've got to buy some shoes  
 No heat, no hot water,  
 Roaches in the bread  
 Ceiling peeling, bathroom flooding  
 Five kids crying all in one bed.

*Hide*

The caseworker is coming  
 I've got to find a man  
 No heat, no hot water,  
 Roaches in the bread  
 My man done gone  
 He got damn tired of  
 Hiding under the bed.

--- Glenn Hines



## ACT I

### Dramatis Personae:

*Spleen:* A servant, human being, artist, of indeterminate age.

### SCENE 1

Spleen as Servant

#### SPLEEN:

Yesterday I tried purgation. *(pause)* Which failed. *(pause)* There seems to be little you can do about constipation. *(pause)* It's the food. The food which they allow me. It's already brittle with age by the time I get it. I've tried washing it down with large gulps of water. Does no good. *(returns to dusting table)*

I don't quite know how long I've been here. *(looks about him timidly, as though he were in some kind of asylum)* It seems to me to have been a considerable length of time. There's this bald-headed fellow that brings me my food. Everyday. He has some kind of accent. I don't know where he's from. Or whether he's from anyplace at all except my cell door. I don't know who feeds him. He seldom speaks; makes a little noise with the tray and then leaves. I try to keep this place clean but it's no use. Dust gathers as soon as you get through. It comes on so silently. More quietly even than the one who brings me my food. I try to keep the place in readiness for Publicani. *(says the name matter-of-factly as though everyone should know him)* I've done this table at least a million times. *(thinks for a moment)* I didn't know what a million was until I counted the times I did this table. *(looks at table)* I should give it a name. I've done it so well that there are

— little circles worn into the wood.

I know that Publicani is coming back because he left very strict orders that the place must be spotless for him when he returns. I never saw him myself. But there was a fellow who worked here before me. He saw him. The fellow here before me was not my father though I thought he was for a while. He saw Publicani and told me about him. I notice that my guard is

getting old. So I guess I must be getting old too. Sometime ago, *(pause)* when it was warmer. A girl passed my cell and looked in. Perhaps I amused her in some way. She couldn't have seen very much of me because I was on my knees as usual. In any case she came in, wept for me and gave me some pussy. I didn't really know what to

do with it. *(smiles childishly)* It was very good anyway. I gave her one of my dusting rags to remember me by.

No one has bothered to tell me what my offense was. It must have been something rather large to make them get this upset. *(looks around)* Perhaps Publicani will explain it all to me when he comes.

I must be doing my job all right

# TERMINUS and NON TERMINUS

ED WHITE





because they still feed me. That starchy food they give me. It must cost them something, (pause) although they may grow it themselves. (gets up from floor) I've tried many ways to brighten my little cell. I've even taken to dusting the light bulbs. Everything helps to make the day a little...nicer.

There's a part of the day that I sit waiting. I call it afternoon, it doesn't matter. I sat in the other corner before. Now I sit in this corner; it's more comfortable this way really. I incline myself like this toward the door and listen...but neither Publicani nor the girl comes. (Darkness.)

## SCENE 2

Spleen's Freedom and Manhood

### SPLEEN

The other day they let me out to walk. The first day they allowed me a few minutes only. But now they give me longer. This morning I had at least one full hour of sunlight. At first I didn't quite know what to do out there. So when I pissed against the wall they scolded me. The guard seemed personally disappointed in me. I was sorry.

It was strange the way it happened. The guard just walked in and called me Andras. I didn't know what the hell he was talking about so I prepared myself for a beating. But then he said that I could go out now. Maybe my initiation was complete. The series of tasks which they set before me. (long pause) They gave me this little jacket. (holds up grey jacket) I'm allowed to wear it when I go out. They told me to be careful with it. Because they won't give me another one.

Today I walked out to the place where the sun was brightest. I knew it would hurt my eyes, but I looked at it anyway. There's a sort of yellow which the sunlight makes when it meets the sky naked. The shadow I make isn't a young man's shadow. And yet I know that time is always passing and that later I'll have to celebrate this period of partial light, as the good days of my life. But I can't celebrate now

somehow.

As I was saying about the morning, I met a girl. It wasn't the same girl as before though. I know this because she didn't say anything familiar. I tried to do the same thing as I did before. I smiled the same way, betraying two small dimples. And then I tried to put my hand under her skirt but this time she turned away from me. I was surprised. They're made the same. They all have little holes in the middle of them. But if someone once loved you, it doesn't help the other person to love you. Maybe I can get some kind of certificate, saying that I'm loveable and unsophisticated or something.

I've been thinking about the heavens a lot lately. They don't let me have much of the earth so I think about the heavens. When I close my eyes I can see small spirals. Sometimes I can see circles of light. Each one has their separate glow. I sometimes can hear sounds. A piano and occasionally a horn. I try to imagine who's playing. They must be young people. The sounds are strong. Publicani still has not shown. I keep the place so spotless.

I think I'd like to go out in the late part of the day. Around the time when houses conspire against you. That time of day when the men and their women return, with hands pocketed in buttoned coats.

The other fellow, before he left, told me to never cry out from the center of myself. I wonder what the hell he meant by that?

(Darkness.)

## SCENE 3

Spleen as Artist

(Spleen is found seated at small table. His back to the audience, he is writing.)

### SPLEEN:

They gave me some paper and several pencils. (pause) They said write whatever comes into my mind. Now everyday the guard comes, takes away the old papers and gives me new ones.

They never say anything. They

don't, even make corrections. I don't know if they're pleased with it. They must be, I guess. The food is a little better now since I complained of the constipation. Now they throw in a little cheese to aid the indigestion. (pause) I've decided to name the work: *Dea Moneta's Cunt*. Why not? I had to call it something. I'm going to make the dedication to Publicani. Since it— must be he who keeps me alive. He's sort of a patron, I guess. I don't know what it is exactly that they want of me. (pause) I started doing simple exercises. Like scales on a piano. I recorded the rhythms of my life. The lines of my face, the dimensions of my room. If I do it right perhaps it will be something in my favor. They might let me out for a few days if they like it. Maybe for a week even. I'm the only thing I have to work with. The only thing I know well. I am this room.

They want to know what is going on inside of me. Maybe to find out if there is any relationship between my inward self and my outward self. Two days ago (or was it three? I've been having problems with the spacing of time lately) I was walking by the sea, afraid to look in because you know there are too many bodies there. The smell is too familiar. Too much history and the sea laying down is different from the people walking. Although they're both moving. Maybe sometime right before the end I'll understand everything. Or even something. That would be nice. Perhaps everyone will just rush in from outside and say that it was all just a game. All these years and all this dusting. You see they really didn't mean it at all. Then that girl, whoever she was, will come back too. Kiss me once suddenly from the side and smile.

And then they'll ask something like: "All better now?" And the music will start again.

They say a seed has to travel seven miles in the womb. Seven miles? (long pause) It's been a very long time.

Publicani still has not come.

(Darkness. Curtain.)



# Book Reviews

by Ron Welburn

*Whispers from a Continent: The Literature of Contemporary Black Africa*, by Wilfred Cartey. New York: Random House, 1969. 297 pp. \$8.95. Vintage edition \$2.95.

Literary history and criticism can be repetitious, stuff and insensitive, blaring, blind and unsympathetic. A Black American, Professor Cartey of Columbia, demonstrates that it can also be conceived and written with imaginative warmth and intuition -- that is to say, written poetically. His *Whispers from a Continent*, which covers Africa's literature since the forties, has been given orchestral dimensions and communicates with passion. It is one of the most lyrical pieces of critical writing to hit the literary world.

The book is structured around two central themes: the African writer's "movement away" from tradition and culture due to the trauma of colonization, and his "movement back" through Negritude and attempts to reaffirm the human link with a spiritual universe. In each of the chapters there is a concern for motifs -- from the blisses of childhood to the disintegration and destruction of traditional society; tribal and family organization and the individual; the problems presented by urbanization and politics -- but only as they constitute the nature of a particular phase of the social atmosphere as revealed in creative writing. The author gives us no premise for his work as such; i.e., he offers no statement of rationale for what he is about to do or -- for what he accomplishes. Instead, his long historical prose poem grabs our interest from page one and permits us to discover its own purpose and direction. Cartey has, literally speaking, adapted the style and form of the African epic tale to a literary critique -- a refreshing approach, and one that exemplifies Soul on a resilient level.

If for no other reason than in the

formal approach, *Whispers from a Continent* involves some revolutionary writing. Cartey raps, true, and to those familiar with Africa it has been said before. But he does more than just rap. He breaks free of the structural inhibitions that make literary evaluations boring, and gets to the quick. Then he stands up in his writing.

Although Cartey will compare authors, he rarely engages in previous aesthetic arguments. In discussing Negritude, for example, he is not concerned with the ensuing controversy surrounding it. Another feature of his approach is his inherent sympathy with the ethos of African writing, and the resulting insistence upon judging it only upon its own terms. In the "Belief and Man's Faith" section, for example, where he discusses the folk-inspired works of Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, and Amos Tutuola, he obviously does not perceive the novels of the latter as lacking aesthetic development. Tutuola's string of adventures within one novel has been assessed as static and boring by critics both Black and white, but they are consistent to the structure of storytelling in Africa. Perhaps, then, they are not even novels, not at least in the Western sense. White critics in particular have sought some kind of "progressive change" within one work or a whole canon. But since Black people, like all Afro-Eastern peoples, do not conceptualize a universe where one must innovate oneself and one's art and culture to the Western meaning of "higher and greater" levels of profundity in terms of aesthetic development, what Tutuola has done must be accepted on its own grounds, and with a non-Western ethos as its point of departure.

In its depth, breadth, and sensibility, *Whispers from a Continent* should be placed alongside Wauthier's *Literature and Thought of Modern Africa* and Mercer Cook's fine, if less extensive, capsule history in *The Militant Black Writer*. I hope we will soon perform similar justices

to the literatures of Afro-America.

*The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, by Sam Greenlee. New York: Richard W. Baron Publishing Co., 1969. 248 pp.

Go from protest to so-called "liberation" fiction. Writing about "revolution," to warn the man (as if...). *Spook Who Sat by the Door* has received the expected pre-evaluative plaudits and fanfare, none of which should be trusted. *Books and Bookmen's* cover blurb tells us the book "makes the Black Muslims look like a Boy Scout rally..." which is exactly what ignorant white America wants to hear. From a distance (permitting some stretch of objectivity?) the *Insh Press* noted: "There is, however, a very persuasive logic behind the easy-thriller-style writing. How many American Negroes really feel like this?"

Brother Greenlee served with USIA in the Middle East, where he helped put down the Kassem revolt in Baghdad. His novel's hero, Dan Freeman, is like himself, a CIA office-boy dropout who gains the respect of his administrators, and returns to Chicago to be a professional negro social worker covering a dynamic role as leader and brains of a highly disciplined gang of bloods who give the city's police, national guard, and the 82nd Airborne Division guerrilla fits. Freeman's program is paramilitary, and is so up tight on the surface it has branches in every city in the country. The tale runs smoothly, but its details yield no real surprises, except to a turned-on drop-out public and its press services.

Greenlee's style is that of a journalist, and this is the kind of tale you'd expect to find serialized in the *Daily News*. Many novelists today prefer this particular prosaic approach. Story content is briefly conveyed; few words are wasted; yet too much is mere documentary and comment. For better or worse, since in this so-called McLuhanesque culture people don't read anymore, reading is not for education but

cont on pg 22



# Theatre Review

by CLAYTON RILEY

*Purlie* is back. Come to haunt us all, remind us how true it is that the more the world changes, the more it remains the same.

*...yes it does!*

Brother Victorious was out here several years ago, being called by his full name in a production less "inspired" than this one, less "grand," perhaps, but one that was, by any standard imaginable, considerably less pretentious as well. Today we turn ourselves on with big and brassy stuff designed to impress, structured to bring awe and senses of wonder. Technology helps create those levels of imagination we no longer even pretend to possess; and with a few tired songs, couple of energetic but otherwise insipid dance numbers, and just a bit of advance press gimmickry... well, here's the show. *Purlie Victorious. Just Plain Purlie. Purlie Faces Life.*

So he returns, and we wish so much to welcome him...son and Brother...but how can we do it? He is no more correct, no more into anything than he was, than he used to be. In short, his shit is not together. The program he's running down is as uncool as ever, and it's worse now because its existence pretends no change has been experienced by him or by us.

*...Purlie in the Sky, Uncle Purlie's Cabin...*

Take the attitude, you cannot win them all. Doesn't begin to help. Say to yourself, the actors need the work. No good. The musical *Purlie* remains through any possibility of logic, explanation or justifying, what it is: an obscenity, a joke played by "nice" people on folks seeking ways to stay alive; a grim sort of evening's profanity we cannot dismiss as insignificant, cannot accept as valid, as capable of taking us to better times. (Or, at least,

toward understanding what "better times" should really mean.)

If anything about America makes sense, why is a performer with Melba Moore's incredibly affecting voice being offered a resurrected corpse as the Broadway vehicle designed, one must assume, to bring her some measure of public acclaim?

*...nothing about america makes sense, Brother...*

What madness she has developed recently brings Novella Nelson, with all her beauty and all that her beauty implies, to this latter-day minstrel show?

*...the rent goes on, Brother, past all rhetoric; beyond bullshit ideologies, food is still paid for with bucks...*

So what is there to say? That the major trouble with a piece of work like this lies in its ability to be presented now just as it could have been thirty or forty years ago... SRO at the 1935 Mississippi State Fair with the company selling cornbread slices and watermelon-rind pickles for intermissions and aftermath. That we are not yet (if ever we will be) in a position to regard the post-bellum South as anything much less pointedly savage than its antebellum counterpart, not capable of being satirized because the horror is still too much with us. The pools of blood gleam as yet, buses overturned in South Carolina, Georgia's ax-handles being passed around in the U.S. Congress by the cretin who is governor down there...all this...and the dying everywhere...dead cities, dead babies...all of this.

This same state of Georgia is the setting for *Purlie*'s reckless comeback. Reckless because it gestures loosely in the direction of so much that seriously concerns us, builds our raging fires higher and higher, saddens us, too.

Down in the backwoods, Preacher *Purlie* is about to run a game on the local crackers, and in particular Plantation Patrician Ole Cap'n

Cotchibee. (In whose name the rotting county has been christened.)

Brother brings a young Sister to pull off a \$500 caper and con game, by way of reminding us how much Black is still into loose change. The scheme works by not working -- or vice-versa -- and *Purlie*, a lightweight fraud if you ever want to see one (particularly as played, one cautious level at a time by Cleavon Little), gets Sister, congregation and the down payment on that used Cadillac rolling through all our minds. The process carries us through an evening as dull as it is foul...both in conception and execution.

Ossie Davis wrote the original of this piece of nothing, and participated in the current book. How? Damn if I know. But with a group called the Cotton Pickers offering comic relief -- music and patter it was once called -- and the rest of the cast participating at various levels in presenting the most forgettable score since Eve Jones did Apple Core Blues for a captive audience at the Eden Garden Playhouse way back...well, what *could* happen? Philip Rose has directed as though he hadn't the slightest idea of which end ought to be up, when, where....

(Don't tell us about how you're selling tickets by the bushel, Rose; those zombies you've got watching would look at corn fields grow if the daily papers said it was the thing to do. The corn you're selling isn't any worse.)

The only music in the show with enough life to keep the true witness awake occurs at the beginning of both acts: "Walk Him up the Stairs" opens Act I, and "First Thing Monday Mornin'" gets Act II started. After each of these the show has nowhere to go but straight downhill, pausing only now and then for the brilliance of Novella Nelson and Melba Moore, who ought to be elsewhere.

Us, too.



## Letters to the Editor

### Black?

Dear Sirs,

Would you kindly or unkindly contribute to a comparatively (considering the vast and deep-rooted amount of ignorance that is the general rule) ignorant person's understanding of reasons that motivate people to do certain things?

Why, in your magazine, is "Black" written with a capital "B" whereas "white" carries a small "w"? Is it that "white" is considered purely a color with its entire tail of mainly negative implications when applied to people, whereas "Black" has transcended the notion of color and become a "national" adjective such as Chinese, Italian, or (for that matter) American?

I am not being facetious, I am curious and would sincerely appreciate your answer--and if you should wonder and don't know yet... I am white, i.e., my skin color would fall into that category.

Peace and Power to the People.

Juliana Contner

New York City

**Editor's reply:** A free people should have the right to designate who they

are. We prefer to designate ourselves, as a whole people, as "Black," or "Afro-American," rather than by the objectionable slave term "negro." When whites, if ever, decide they want "white" capitalized, we'll consider it.

### Let It Crawl

Dear Mr. Watts:

I want to thank you deeply for your February 1970 editorial, "Let It Crawl." I myself have been thinking seriously about this "thing" that is with us today where young, talented and gifted Black men & women, in their "Blackness," are naively rushing through the same gates of nothingness as their white counterparts. We don't need any thrills or kicks -- we don't need to be hip -- the naturalness of our experience as Blacks in all America has endowed us with the eyes & soul of awareness. A Black drug user is nothing more than an assistant of his oppressors and a white drug user is a loser, and if we are truly hip we'll know that little elementary fact. There are great tasks ahead of us that we have to go with whether we like it or not -- that is, if we're going to survive as a people -- and we ain't gonna build shit with some funky oratory about kicking "whitey's" ass with glazed and

empty eyes.

Lonne Elder, III  
New York City

### The Black Muslims

Dear Sir:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound satisfaction with *LIBERATOR*, especially with your most informative and tart editorials. They always seem to get across to the readers that seemingly inside info that we, Black People in general, never seem to get except from reading the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper, which brings to mind that I have never read anything in the *LIBERATOR* concerning the Nation of Islam under the able leadership of The Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Messenger Of Allah. We (the Muslims) too are striving mightily for total Black Freedom, Justice, and Equality, so that is why I asked, because most of the Black news media seem to deliberately ignore the Nation of Islam. Is this by design or is it unintentional?

May you have continued success, and Peace be on you.

Sidney X. (Jenkins)

Marquette, Michigan

**Editor's note:** *LIBERATOR* has included articles on the Muslims in the past, and will no doubt also in the future.

### BOOKS cont.

entertainment (the tube has greater attraction); conceivably, Brother Greenlee's novel will find itself a screenwriter at a later date, and his story will star....

Gone are the days (?) when Black writers with journalistic experience gave us a full scope of their characters' emotions, as did Wright, Baldwin, Ellison, John A. Williams, to name a few.

*Spook Who Sat by the Door* is hardly a 1984 scene or anywhere near. Its narrator thinks and utters the usual truths, too numerous to mention. And since extraneous and probable events are omitted (white militant groups doing their duty), the book is a spook-gesture. As a projection, the story, even if a thriller, is not beyond the impossible. And

as a product of popculture thinking in America it is of interest to white folks, who will acclaim Brother Greenlee as their newest flagellator with a stirring novel. As creative writing, however, the book leaves much to be desired. Greenlee can tell a whale of a tale, and that's about all; he hasn't even checked the audience.

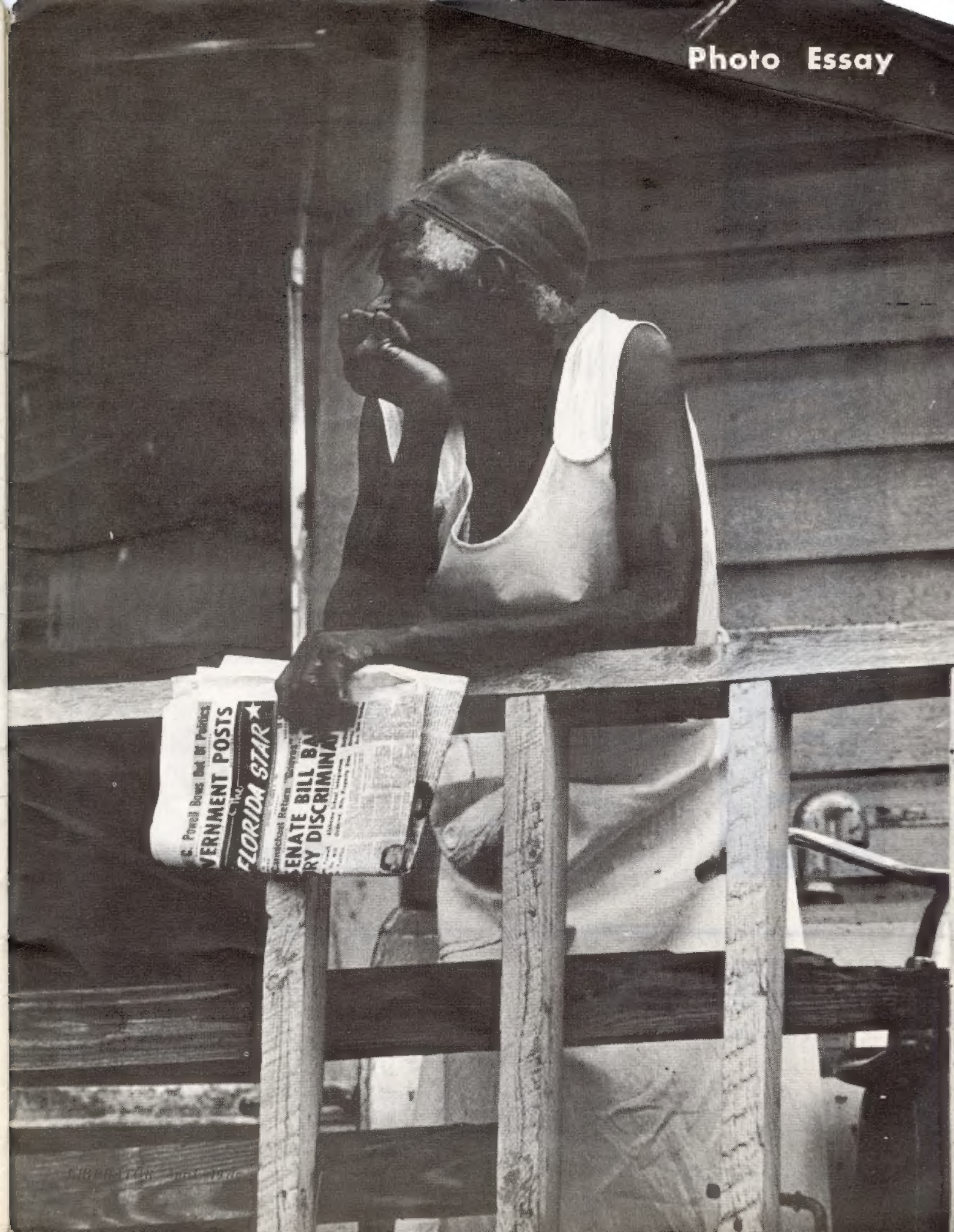
The times and conditions of society make certain kinds of writing and certain kinds of stories possible. This is no time for romanticism. Dan Freeman's forces are well-trained; but what happens after the novel leaves off? Greenlee, of course, following the convention of fiction writers, does not provide us with answers. Despite the Freedom Fighters' flea-attacks, unarmed Black

people still die in the streets. Art and/or propaganda is now a tired-horse argument. As we leave the wounded "Freebee" in his apartment digging on the Lady singing "God Bless the Child" to sniper rhythms, the stiff drink and the wound leave him feeling no pain. Condition Red is on. This is art and projection; under the circumstances, no popculture matter for entertainment and "breaking into print." Like polemics, art must become concerned with whatever possible circumstances exist for the survival of all Black people.

Quo Vadis, Brother Greenlee?

Ron Welburn is a member of the faculty at the University of Arizona at Tucson.







**Our tenth year**

# 5 Compelling Reasons Why You Should Subscribe To **LIBERATOR**

1. Each month. *LIBERATOR's* compelling approach to journalism has made it the only magazine of its kind today.
2. Issue after issue *LIBERATOR* commands the immediate attention of all Americans.
3. We not only report news, we help make news.
4. We bring you penetrating analysis of trends in Afro-American communities, and in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
5. *LIBERATOR* - Tough magazine to ignore - if you want to keep up with a changing world.

SUBSCRIBE NOW 12 issues \$4.00

*LIBERATOR*

244 East 46th Street, New York, N.Y., 10017

Please enroll me as a subscriber for:

☐ one year, \$4.00 or, ☐ two years, \$7.50

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Payment enclosed

Back copies from 1963 on, are available at .50¢ each.

## **LIBERATOR**

244 East 46th Street, New York, N.Y., 10017

RETURN REQUESTED

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
PERMIT NO. 7379

6-70  
PERIODICAL LIBRARIAN  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
5 WASHINGTON ST

THIRD CLASS MAIL